the programming for preparing a request for quotation is invoked on the user's computer or computer like device. When a user wants to sell something, a request for quotation class definition is prepared using programming provided for that purpose. A typical situation in which a user who is predominantly a buyer may choose to be a vendor is when the user overstocks an item and chooses to resell the surplus inventory via the network. To sell surplus inventory without the network of this invention requires advertising, word of mouth, cold calling, sale to a broker or the like. In addition, the network software could be arranged to enable vendors to donate unwanted equipment, et cetera, to charity network members. In addition, the network filters could be defined to permit intra organizational notices of availability or requirements for products or services, especially in large distributed corporations or govermental agencies.

The network is a routing service with the routing being controlled by class description filters which can be specified by the buyer, the network computer, and the vendors. By analogy, it is like a cross between a telephone call and a radio broadcast where the ultimate recipient is neither an individual nor a mass audience, but a class of recipients identified by their characteristics. In the preferred embodiment the vendor class of network members are filtered to be selected based on their likelihood to respond to the request for quotation. Alternatively, or in addition, the vendor responses may likewise be filtered to satisfy conditions of the vendors responding or in accordance with predefined conditions for faciltating a linkage between the propective buyer and an acceptable seller.

What we claim is:

1. A system for engaging in commercial transactions, comprising;

filter means for accepting filter conditions from buyers and sellers;

a plurality of buyers for communicating RFQs to said filter means;

a plurality of sellers for communicating quotes to said filter means in response to said RFQs, said filter means including means for determining, based upon said filter conditions, which sellers should receive RFQs from a buyer, and which quotes should be received by the buyer.

2. A method of utilizing a data network for advertising and selling items for sale by a seller including the steps of:

communicating, to the centralized filter means, from said seller, sale information indicating items offered for sale and at least one class of buyers to receive sale information;

communicating, to the centralized filter means, from a potential buyer, a category of item in which said buyer is interested;

using said filter means to match buyer and seller supplied information;

communicating an offer for sale from said seller for at least one item in said category of items indicated, to a buyer if said buyer is within said class and said items are within said category.

* * * * *

Sub N² 3. A method for effectuating a purchase between a buyer and a seller over a communications network, comprising the steps of:

    providing over said network a hypertext link containing page including information of a seller's offer and at least one hypertext link for said buyer to make a response;

    displaying said hypertext link containing page to said buyer; and

    sending a purchase request by said buyer by clicking on said hypertext link.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein said step of sending a purchase request is completed by simply clicking on said hypertext link without inputting further information.

5. The method of claim 3 wherein said purchase request includes a consent that said seller is authorized to use buyer's credit information to fulfill said purchase.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said step of sending a purchase request is completed by clicking on said hypertext link.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein said action of clicking is taken only once.

8. The method of claim 5 wherein said credit information includes buyer's billing and shipping information sufficient to effectuate the purchase.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein said buyer's credit information is pre-stored in a server.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein said server is remotely accessible by said seller through said network.

11. The method of claim 3 wherein said hypertext link containing page is an email message.

12. The method of claim 3 wherein said hypertext link containing page is a web page.

13. The method of claim 3 wherein said purchase request is sent as an email request by clicking on said hypertext link.

14. The method of claim 3 wherein said purchase request is sent directly to said seller by clicking on said hypertext link.

15. The method of claim 3 wherein said hypertext link containing page includes at least one hypertext link for further showing said information of said offer.

16. The method of claim 3 wherein said hypertext link containing page is provided by said seller directly to said buyer.

17. The method of claim3 wherein said hypertext link containing page is provided by a central processing unit remotely accessible by said buyer and said seller through said communications network.

Sub A³

18. The method of claim 3 wherein said purchase request is sent to said central processing unit.

19. The method of claim 3 wherein said step of displaying is implemented by a browser.

Sub A4

20. A method of effectuating a purchase between a buyer and a seller over a communications network, comprising the steps of:
   a. providing credit information of said buyer to a server;
   b. providing over said network, from said seller to said buyer, a hypertext link containing page including information of a seller's offer and at least one hypertext link for said buyer to make a response;
   c. displaying said hypertext link containing page to said buyer;
   d. sending a purchase request by said buyer by clicking on said hypertext link; and
   e. fulfilling said purchase upon receipt of said purchase request from said buyer.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein said server is maintained by a central processing unit remotely accessible by said buyer and said server through said network.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein said step c) is carried out by said central processing unit.

23. The method of claim 20 wherein said step c) is carried out by said seller.

24. The method of claim 20 wherein said hypertext link containing page is an email message.

25. The method of claim 20 wherein said hypertext link containing page is a web page.

26. The method of claim 20 wherein at step d) said purchase request is directly sent to said seller.

Sub C4

27. The method of claim 21 wherein at step d) said purchase request is sent to said central processing unit.

28. the method of claim 20 further including a step of:
retrieving by said seller, upon receipt of said purchase request from said buyer, of said buyer's credit information kept on said server so as to fulfill said purchase.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein said step e) comprises a step of clearing credit of said buyer directly by said seller.

30. The method of claim 21 wherein said step e) comprises a step of clearing credit of said buyer by said central processing unit.

31. A computerized system for effectuating a purchase between a buyer and a seller over a communications network, comprising:
means for said seller to provide a hypertext link containing page including information of at least one offer and at least one hypertext link for said buyer to make a response:
means for said seller to transmit said hypertext link containing page to said buyer.
means for said buyer to receive and display said hypertext link containing page: and
means for said buyer to click on said hypertext link to send a purchase request in response to said offer.

32. The system of claim 31 further comprising means for keeping credit information of said buyer that is accessible to said seller.

33. The system of claim 32 wherein said means for keeping buyer's credit information is accessible to said seller only upon receipt of said purchase request from said buyer.

34. The system of claim 33 wherein said purchase request includes an identifier for said buyer with which said seller may access said buyer's credit information.

35. The system of claim 32 wherein said means for keeping buyer's credit information is a server.

36. The system of claim 35 wherein said server is remotely located from both said buyer and said seller, and is connected to said buyer and said seller through said network.

37. The system of claim 31 wherein said hypertext link containing page is an email message.

38. The system of claim 31 wherein said hypertext link containing page further comprises at least one hypertext link for further showing said information of said quotation offer.

39. The system of claim 32 further including means for inputting said buyer's credit information into said means for keeping said buyer's credit information.

40. The system of claim 31 further including a website of said seller, accessible by said buyer through said network, for providing said hypertext link containing page to said buyer.

41. The system of claim 40 wherein said network is an Internet network.

42. A method of enabling a buyer to purchase an item over a communications network from a remote system, the method comprising the steps of:
    selecting a hypertext link indicative of a desire to pace an electronic purchase order;
    in response to said step of selecting, transmitting at least one electronic purchase order to a seller; and
    in response to said step of transmitting, providing credit information of the buyer maintained at said remote system to complete the purchase of said item.

43. A method of enabling a buyer to purchase an item over a communications network from a remote system, the method comprising the steps of:
    selecting a hypertext link indicative of a desire to place an electronic purchase order;
    in response to said step of selecting, verifying that the buyer has sufficient credit to make the intended purchase; and
    in further response to said step of selecting, transmitting electronically credit verification information and at least one purchase order to the seller.

44. A method of purchasing an item over a communications network from a system that facilitates the selling of goods and services comprising the steps of:
    prestoring credit information of a buyer, and
    in response to selection of a hyperlink by a buyer indicating a purchase, matching said prestored information with said buyer to complete said purchase.